

AN ALBINO COMMON SHEATH-TAILED BAT

TAPHOZOUS GEORGIANUS FROM THE ARNHEMLAND ESCARPMENT

by Stephen Swanson

In the afternoon of the 10th June 1979, John Cann and myself entered a cave in a rock outcrop adjacent to Nourlangie Rock in the Kakadu National Park. The cave is a known roost of the Ghost Bat *Macroderma gigas*, and it was our intention to photograph this animal. On this occasion few Ghost Bats were observed.

As we prepared to leave the cave we noticed a white bat sheltering in a crevice inside the cave. The bat was coaxed from the crevice, photographed to facilitate a positive identification and subsequently released inside the cave.

From the photograph the bat was identified by John McKean as an albino Common Sheath-Tailed Bat *Taphozous georgianus*.

The accompanying photograph is a black and white reproduction of the original colour transparency. The fur colouring was uniform brilliant white, both ventrally and dorsally, the wing membranes whitish, and the limbs pink. The ears were conspicuous yellow and the snout and face pinkish-brown. The eyes were black.

An encounter with an adult albino animal in the wild is a rare event, considering the initial rarity of an albino birth, coupled with greater pressure from predators because of the conspicuous colouration. Although nocturnal, an albino bat would be equally as disadvantaged as an albino diurnal animal. One can imagine the prominence of an albino bat flying beneath a full moon.



Albino Common Sheath-tailed Bat
Taphozous georgianus